

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 10, 2004

The Honorable Gale Norton  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Madam Secretary:

Each of us has spoken with you in recent weeks regarding the financial situation at the EROS Data Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Members of our staffs also met yesterday with Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Weimer on this matter. We appreciate your understanding and willingness to work to resolve this problem.

As you know, the EROS Data Center is facing a \$5.1 million budget shortfall due to reduced revenues caused by the Landsat 7 malfunction. This problem is not one of EROS's making, and we believe that the Department of the Interior needs to take immediate action to preserve the full technical expertise and capabilities of the EROS Data Center while we consider efforts to replace the Landsat hardware. On February 12, you indicated in your testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that this could be achieved through the reprogramming of funds, and that this could be accomplished without harming other U.S. Geological Survey programs. We understand that a proposal for reprogramming is currently being reviewed by USGS, and that a decision is expected soon.

We are concerned by suggestions that the reprogramming proposal may be altered to utilize USGS funds and require the EROS Data Center to finance a significant portion of the shortfall internally. This would stretch EROS's already thin budget to an unmanageable degree and, we are told, lead to significant layoffs of technical employees at the Center. This is unacceptable, and will have far-reaching implications for the future operation of EROS and future Landsat missions. It would be unfair to require USGS and EROS to manage the entire shortfall themselves, and anything that harms EROS's budget will only exacerbate the problem, not solve it. Therefore we urge you to work within the Department of the Interior's budget to find reasonable, alternative sources of funding that will help USGS address the current revenue shortfall. We are ready to work with you toward that end and toward the goal of ensuring the long-term continuation of the Landsat mission.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tom Daschle  
United States Senate



Tim Johnson  
United States Senate